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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001149

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER  
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY  
PARIS FOR C. NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER  
BANGKOK FOR WIN DAYTON  
DS/OP/AF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE MARCHES JUNE 6, BUSINESS ALMOST AS USUAL

- MASS ACTION DAY FOUR

REF: A. HARARE 1136

[1B](#). HARARE 1122  
[1C](#). HARARE 1101  
[1D](#). HARARE 1097  
[1E](#). HARARE 1081

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary:

[11](#). (C) Reports continued on June 5 that security forces beat MDC activists in high-density suburbs around Harare on the previous night; there were numerous unconfirmed reports that riot police even beat patients, and bystanders at the Avenues Clinic in central Harare on June 4. The MDC called for nationwide marches on June 6, but it is unclear whether the MDC expects its membership to show up in force, or whether their strategy is simply to cause people to be cautious on Friday and stay home. Police seized weapons at the house of an MDC activist on June 4; the MDC MP for the area said they were planted. Most businesses appeared to be open as normal on June 5. End Summary.

Reports of Beatings

[12](#). (U) There were reports from several sources that riot police beat patients and bystanders at the Avenues Clinic in downtown Harare on June 4. Elisabeth Sibotshiwe, the Principle Matron on duty at the time, acknowledges that police did visit Avenues on that day, but denies that they assaulted anyone inside the building. There were unconfirmed reports that riot police questioned, beat, and arrested two people outside the clinic. The police then allegedly entered the waiting area shouting, and assaulted patients, journalists and bystanders with fists and batons.

[13](#). (C) MDC Presidential Advisor, Gandhi Mudzingwa, and MDC MP for St. Mary's Job Sikhala reported that security forces beat MDC activists for the second night in a row in the high-density suburbs of Highfield, Budiriro, Glen Norah and Chitungwiza near Harare on the night of June 4 - 5. They both acknowledged that fewer people were beaten on that night than on the previous one. Sibotshiwe said that Avenues was "quiet"; she was not seeing an above average number of beating victims in the Avenues Clinic casualty ward on June 5.

Marches?

[14](#). (C) The MDC ran a full-page ad in the independent Daily News on June 5 calling for marches into centers of town on June 6. According to Mudzingwa, the marches were to start at 10 am, and were likely to be small-scale events with the leadership and primary activists participating. Sikhala said that most activists who had been arrested earlier in the week had been released, and were organizing for the marches. Mudzingwa said that even with the earlier arrests, there was still considerable enthusiasm within the party faithful to march. When confronted with the possibility that security forces might prevent a march before it even started, Sikhala suggested that the strategy was to promote the march and at the very least people might be afraid to leave their homes - helping to log the stayaway as a full week's exercise.

Weapons Seized

[15](#). (C) On June 5, the government-owned The Herald reported that a cache of weapons was found at the house of an MDC activist in St. Mary's (a high-density suburb of Harare). The GOZ did not claim that these weapons were intended for use in this week's demonstrations, but state media used the seizure as part of its propaganda effort to paint the MDC as a violent party. Sikhala confirmed that the weapons were found, but he said that police planted them previous to the seizure. The Herald reported that police seized 22 sticks of

dynamite, 5 kilograms of fertilizer, one nine mm round of ammunition, 22 electric detonators, electric wires, and other less dangerous items. Sikhala did not confirm what weapons were actually seized.

Treason Trial

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16. (U) On June 4 in the treason trial of MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai, the state asked the judge to change Tsvangirai's

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bail conditions to bar him from making inflammatory statements that might cause public disorder. The State was referring to Tsvangirai's comments, reported in the press, urging Zimbabweans to participate in the June 2 - 6 mass action. The Defense argued that the law under which the State argued its case, Section 24 of the draconian Public Order and Security Act (POSA), was too vague, and therefore unconstitutional. Justice Paddington Garwe said he would deliver his judgment on the issue on June 6.

Business Almost as Usual

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17. (U) Driving around Harare on June 5, Poloff observed that only about 15 percent of shops in downtown Harare, and 50 percent of businesses in the light industrial areas of Harare were closed. Pedestrian and vehicle traffic in downtown Harare seemed normal. Activity in the high-density suburb of Mbare seemed normal.

18. (SBU) One or two groups of 3 police officers were visible in downtown Harare on June 4; they assumed very relaxed postures.

19. (C) According to Richard Pope, a furniture manufacturer in Bulawayo, about 30 percent of his workers did not show up on June 5. His factory was open, but running at reduced capacity. He said many other factories nearby were open and operating, most with an average of 75 percent of their normal workforces. He said activity around Bulawayo seemed almost normal with most banks and businesses open.

Comment:

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10. (C) There are various factors influencing whether the June 6 marches come off. MDC activists are shell-shocked from arrests and beatings earlier this week, but still enthusiastic, and even angrier now because they could not get earlier marches off the ground. Security forces are now practiced in methods to quell marches before they happen. With failed marches earlier this week, MDC leaders are not confident a march can be pulled off on June 6. But it appears they are going ahead with the plan, under the notion that at least preparation efforts on both sides will cause ordinary Zimbabweans to stay at home and thus make the stayaway a week long exercise. End Comment.

SULLIVAN